Recommendations for Online Exams

from the UFV Online Exam Task Force
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Preamble

UFV recognizes that faculty have autonomy regarding their courses, including assessments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty might be uncertain as to how to best deliver online exams and prepare their students for them. The Task Force recommends the following guidance for faculty electing to use online exams as part of their student assessment.

Pre-test planning

- Survey students early in the semester using a Blackboard survey tool (or similar) to find out if students have adequate technology, where they are located etc. TLC can help you design a survey.
- In advance, take the exam(s) yourself from a variety of devices to ensure it works from different platforms and to ensure that the exam settings are what you expect and/or need. Use the Student Preview mode in Blackboard to do this. TLC can help you with the review of the exam.
- Provide a short no-stakes practice quiz for students early in the course to familiarize them with the types of questions you'll be using and the way Blackboard presents the questions.
- Consider having the students prepare a practice exam in advance of midterms and finals. Have them submit questions to you and compile for them using the same conditions as the actual exam (e.g. time limits per question and types of questions).
- Help your students familiarize themselves with online assessments by including several lower stakes quizzes during the term, using the same question types and conditions. This will allow students to check their tech before a graded assessment without adding stress and to become familiar with the assessment tools used in the course.

Test design and options

- Keep questions and answers as concise as possible and of consistent length.
- Use a large question bank so that each student receives a random sample of these questions. This will make answer sharing more difficult between students.
- Randomize answer options for multiple-choice questions. To do so, you will need to be sure that you DO NOT randomize the answers that include, e.g., "All of the above" or "Both A and B."
- To determine appropriate exam duration (options)
  - Read all questions and answers aloud while timing and then double that time
  - Have a novice (e.g. a colleague or someone at home) take the exam, reading and answering all questions. They should finish in about 2/3 of the time you allow students
  - For future reference – monitor results; first students should finish in about 2/3 time allotted

○ Not all students will finish in the time allotted; roughly 10% will not which is similar to timed face-to-face exams
○ Class averages should be reasonable

Test settings
● If your exam is synchronous (i.e., all students take the exam at the same time), be sure to be available during the availability period; provide a protocol for students to follow to communicate with you if they want to ask questions or experience technical difficulties. Consider an alternate, later exam time for students in widely different time zones.
● For asynchronous exams, consider flexible time delivery for the exam (i.e. making it available for 12-24 hours). Once students begin the exam, they have a fixed amount of time to complete.
● Set the exam to open in the same browser window.
● Ensure that only one question appears on the screen at any given time on the test. This is to ensure that students are not able to capture the screen with all test questions at one time.
● Set the options to restrict the amount of feedback students receive on exam completion.
● Use the auto-submit option.
● Be sure to extend the time for students that have accommodations for that recommended by the Centre for Accessibility Services.

Academic Integrity
● Discuss academic integrity with your students frequently and also immediately prior to the online exam. Ensure that links to Policy 70 are provided on your course page and that students are required to review it.
● Include an academic integrity statement in the instructions of your online exam or require they acknowledge they have read and understood Policy 70 before continuing with the exam.

Other recommendations
● If your exam includes both questions that are graded by Blackboard and are subjective, written answers consider breaking this into two separate exam parts with a short break in between.
● Check over short answer (e.g. fill-in-the-blank) questions to assign part marks for spelling mistakes. Do not rely on auto-grading.

Online Exam Checklist/Considerations

1. Survey students early to confirm they have appropriate test-taking knowledge and technology. Book a computer lab for students who have serious connectivity issues. Or provide flexible options such as an oral exam or alternative assignment.
2. Use the Student Preview mode in Blackboard to take your own test from at least two devices to ensure that the test's time settings are what you expect and/or need. For timed tests, ensure a reasonable amount of time is provided to students to complete the online test, but keep the amount of time for each question as short as reasonable (eg. 1 minute per recall multiple choice question; 2 minutes per application-based multiple choice question). This should also prevent answer sharing and limit the ability of students to look up the answer in another browser window.
3. Provide a practice exam for students prior to administering the online exam
4. Use a large question pool and random blocks to be sure each student receives a different version of the test.
5. Ask application or case-based questions that require critical thinking or problem-solving, rather than questions that can be looked-up. Assume that an online test is open-book. Do not rely on auto-grading; use short-answer and essay questions.
6. Discuss academic integrity with your students prior to the online exam. Post Policy 70 statement with review status in the exam instructions.
7. Discuss with students the protocol for asking questions during the exam period i.e., posting to the discussion board, sending email or course messages, or using the chat feature in Zoom or Collaborate.
8. Discuss with students how you will deal with technical issues during the exam so that they are prepared. Prepare them by sharing this video.
9. Research how to resolve student issues with tests.
10. Set the test options as recommended by TLC:
    ○ Set the availability window (display after times) to a minimum of 12 hours **OR** set a due date and choose the option "do not allow students to start the test after the due date has passed".
    ○ if your test is timed, use the auto-submit option so the test is submitted automatically when the time expires. **Do not use** force completion for a timed test.
    ○ Allow one attempt but add test availability exceptions for students registered with CAS
    ○ Set the feedback options to restrict the amount of feedback students receive on exam completion.
    ○ Present questions one at a time. This is to ensure that students are not able to capture the screen with all test questions at one time. Allow backtracking.
    ○ Randomize questions for multiple-choice and avoid "All of the above" options.

Considerations for Instructors

When choosing to assess with synchronous online tests and examinations, the following are some areas for consideration:

- While there are ways to encourage and further academic integrity when students take synchronous online tests, there are no methods that will entirely eliminate academic misconduct.
- There is a risk of technical failure for students due to the requirement for extended, sustained internet access.
- Students may not have access to reliable Internet access or may be relying on data plans to access course material and the testing platform.
- Not all students will have access to computers to complete the online exam; they may be relying on smartphones or other mobile devices, resulting in a highly stressful testing situation.
- Not all students will have webcams available or will only have cell phone cameras available. Internet access may not support live Zoom video and an online exam at the same time.
- Not all students have safe living spaces where they can turn on their cameras during an exam.
- Some students experience higher levels of anxiety with synchronous online exams.
- Students may be in different time zones and may have difficulty attending particularly if exams are held in the middle of the night.
- Additional student accommodations may be required.
- Consider open book tests (designed for students to complete with access to additional resources, such as websites, lecture notes, textbooks, etc.)
- Ensure a reasonable amount of time is provided to students to complete the online test, including time for each question (eg. 1 minute per recall multiple choice question; 2 minutes per application-based multiple choice question). This should also prevent answer sharing and limit the ability of students to look up the answer in another browser window.
- Consider having students contribute exam questions to the test bank.
- Ask application-based questions that require additional thinking, rather than questions that rely on student knowledge of basic course content. Use short-answer or essay-type questions and provide citation guidelines. Use questions that reference classroom discussions and activities to make the exam more robust.
- Ensure instructions are written in plain language to avoid misinterpretations.
- Consider using a computer lab for students who have serious connectivity issues.
- Provide an option for an oral exam or an option to write a "paper exam" on-campus following COVID-19 rules or provide an alternative assignment for students with significant connectivity issues.

Considerations for Students (can be posted on course site)

Technology
Follow the same requirements for a standard online class: https://ufv.ca/media/assets/adult-education/Online-Learning-System-Checklist.pdf

How to Prepare for an Online Test

Understand the online test logistics: What time is the exam? Is it available for a particular window of time? How long do I have to write the exam? Be careful with times if you are in a different timezone. Do you need to write the exam in one sitting or can you take a break and come back?

Become Informed: Find out what material and topics the test will cover. Understand the test format. Will there be multiple-choice questions or short answers? Will you write an essay? The format of the test will determine how you tackle learning the material.

Understand what resources you can use: Is this an open-book exam? Can I use course materials? Google? Outside research articles? Do you need in-text citations and/or a references page for your exam? Academic integrity still applies. Or is it a closed book exam where no outside resources are allowed.

Understand how your online test will be taken: Will it be administered through MyClass? Will you write an in-class essay via a Zoom synchronous session? Does your class offer a practice exam?

Make your own test material: Studies have shown that practice tests work better than simply highlighting or re-reading your notes.

Practice: Outline possible essay topics ahead of time. For mathematical tests, perform plenty of practice problems similar to ones that you know will appear. Make a list of questions that you think might show up on the test and answer them.

Test out your equipment: Ensure that your equipment works optimally well before your test date. Ensure that if you encounter issues, you will have time to resolve this with the help of the Student Device Support Program (SDS). Our Student Device Support (SDS) program is available to registered UFV students who require software and hardware support of their personal devices such as mobile phone, laptop, tablet. Find out more here: https://www.ufv.ca/ocio/it-services/student-device-support/

Create a test space: The ideal environment will be a private space, even if it is a corner of your bedroom, with a table and chair. However, we realize that everyone's situation is different:
- Restart your computer before the test window. Close any unnecessary windows on your computer. Turn off any unnecessary streaming devices such as Xbox, Netflix etc. to ensure a more stable internet connection.

- If you are working in a shared space, headphones or ear-plugs may help to muffle distracting noises.
- If you are unable to access a table but need a flat surface to work on, consider other pieces of furniture e.g. bed, cabinet, garden furniture, or even a deep window ledge or floor.
- Set up your laptop, PC, or other web-enabled devices to work on. If you do not have any web-enabled device, please contact the IT and library help desk
- Let everyone in the house know when you are studying or taking your exam, to try and limit interruptions, or choose times to study and take your exam when it is quieter in the house.
- Ensure you have water to drink; water helps to keep the mind focused.
- Anticipate technical difficulties.
- Do not forget to submit your exam when completed.

Resources for Online Exams

Using Zoom to monitor exams

Description: Consider the following if you are planning to use Zoom or Collaborate Ultra to monitor student activity synchronously while doing the exam.

Benefit: This emulates the in-class experience and may act as a deterrent, but still has its limitations. Students may still *appear* that they are checking notes or checking Google when in fact they are not. Proving that a student cheated using this option may be nearly impossible, but it may deter some.

Challenges: Internet stability may be compromised by having both Zoom and the testing platform active at the same time.

Technology:
- Zoom or Collaborate Ultra
- A very stable internet connection

Assessment Resources

[Assessment](.). **(April 2020). BCcampus.** This guide on assessment from BC Campus provides resources that help faculty to modify their exams and other course assessments as they move their classes online. Contents include:

• [Rule of 2's: Keeping it Simple as You Go Remote for COVID-19](.)
• [Flowchart when considering online exams](.)
• [Delivering a Final Online Exam](.)
• [Testing alternatives](.)
• [Alternatives to Standard Final Exams](.)
• [Alternate Activity Planner](.)
• [Possible Alternatives to Your Final Exam](.)